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## Viewing cable 08ATHENS896, U.S./GREECE MIL-TO-MIL COOPERATION: THE GOOD, THE

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08ATHENS896**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08ATHENS896</a>	2008-06-24 12:09	2011-08-30 01:44	<a href="#">SECRET</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Athens</a>

Appears in these articles:

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OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHHTH #0896/01 1761209  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH (CCY ADX00A9DC35 MSI8294)  
O 241209Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2048  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHMFIASS/NAVSUPPACT SOUDA BAY GR PRIORITY  
RHMFIASS/COMUSNAVEUR NAPLES IT PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIASS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0342

S E C R E T ATHENS 000896

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CLASSIFICATION UPGRADED

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/23/2018

TAGS: [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: U.S./GREECE MIL-TO-MIL COOPERATION: THE GOOD, THE

BAD, AND THE NECESSARY

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Tom Countryman.  
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

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SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION  
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11. (C) The U.S.-Greece bilateral relationship is facing a particularly difficult time, as Washington and Athens have differing views on issues such as the Macedonian name, the independence of Kosovo, and relations with Russia. However, the U.S./Greek military-to-military relationship and the work between our law enforcement and security officials has, thus far, remained strong. Given more difficult bilateral relations, there is a danger that the mil-to-mil relationship could become a casualty. We believe our strong mil-to-mil relationship pays important dividends, and our goal is to support and strengthen it. This message is designed to lay out the current state of the mil-to-mil relationship --listing both positives and the "irritants" we face. It also lays out our recommendations for further mil-to-mil engagement, to try to ensure that this fundamental aspect of our relationship is undamaged. END SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION

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THE GOOD - POSITIVES IN THE MIL-TO-MIL RELATIONSHIP  
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12. (C) The United States and Greece have a long, shared history in defense cooperation, rooted in the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and the Cold War when our assistance helped keep Greece in the West and away from the yoke of communism. The Greeks currently tend to overstate both their contributions and their importance to the United States, and there is no need to accept the Greek hyperbole. But some of the facts of this cooperation speak for themselves.

13. (S) Some of Greece's key contributions are:

--Souda Bay: Souda Bay is the U.S. Navy's most important strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean. A wide variety of U.S. and NATO operations in the Middle East and the Mediterranean depend on this facility in Crete. The GOG has proven to be a very cooperative partner at Souda Bay, though it does not advertise this for domestic political reasons. We are not aware of any Greek restrictions at any time on access, overflight, or deployment of even the most sensitive military assets at Souda Bay.

--Blanket overflight clearances: In the aftermath of 9/11, the Greek Ministry of Defense has granted blanket overflight clearances for all U.S. military aircraft that pass through Greek airspace in support of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Over the last two years the total number of overflight clearances has averaged 28,000 per year.

--U.S.-Greece Joint Commission: The bilateral committee that deals with political-military issues, including relations between Souda Bay and the GOG, holds professional and business-like meetings every six months and is co-chaired by a MFA representative and the Deputy Chief of Mission.

--KFOR: Greek military forces are important contributors to KFOR; we understand they have volunteered to help patrol in the North to assuage ethnic Serb community concerns. According to the latest SHAPE statistics, Greece currently has 655 personnel deployed in Kosovo.

--OAE: Greece is the one of the top three NATO countries with troops supporting Operation Active Endeavor (OAE) -- NATO's only Article 5 operation that is patrolling the Mediterranean to combat terrorism. Greece provides 110 out of a total 652 deployed on OAE. The Greeks have provided two frigates, one fast-attack craft, extensive P-3 air support and significant logistic and staff support at every command level.

--Lebanon: In 2006, the Greek military was among the first on the scene with aircraft and ships to help evacuate expatriates, including Americans, several days before the U.S. was able to react. In 2007, Greece donated a significant amount of artillery ammunition to Lebanon valued at USD 1.2M, in response to an urgent U.S. and Lebanese request. They have also provided two ships as part of the

UNIFIL Maritime Component.

--ISAF: Besides the 144 servicemen deployed in Afghanistan, Greece has contributed USD 64M to Afghanistan with another USD 7.5M allocated.

--Iraq: Though Greece does not have any troops in Iraq, in 2005 and 2006 they donated 100 former East German Qit program allowing 284

U.S. naval vessels to visit 12 Greek ports over the last two years.

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The BAD - IRRITANTS IN THE MIL-TO-MIL RELATIONSHIP  
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**¶4. (S)** Despite the long history between the U.S. and Greece, there have been several issues which have been a source of friction:

-- Aegean Issues: The Turks and the Greeks have long disagreed about the demilitarized status of certain islands in the Aegean, and both sides use the disputes to seek to "score points" against the other. In many cases, there are legitimate legal disputes between Greece and Turkey about a given island's status, and NATO has rightly taken the position that it cannot adjudicate a dispute between Allies, and therefore will not provide NATO support to any planned exercises in those areas.

More recently, however, Greece has sought to challenge recent and specious Turkish claims that the island of Agios Efstratios (AE) is also demilitarized by seeking NATO support for an exercise including overflight of AE. Septel will provide additional detail on this issue, but the Greeks believe the United States' recommendation, when asked for advice by the NATO SG, not/not to support a planned May 2008 exercise due to Turkish threats to intercept Greek aircraft flying under NATO command and control -- was the decisive factor in withdrawal of NATO air support.

-- Macedonia Name: Greeks consider the unmodified use of "Macedonia" by their neighbor to the north as a usurpation of their heritage and warn that it could encourage irredentism towards Greece's northern province of the same name. The popular perception, including in the government and throughout the Greek military, is that Skopje has been "intransigent" in negotiations, as a direct result of "unquestioned support from Washington." At the NATO Summit in Bucharest in April, Greece blocked the invitation of Macedonia into the Alliance. Both the United States and Greece were left with a disappointment, which has clouded the general relationship. The common Greek perception is to see any unwelcome decision from Washington as "punishment" for the veto, which tends to make MFA and MOD less responsive to our requests, large and small. To cite one important example, we suspect PM Karamanlis may defer any decision on procurement of American military equipment because he would likely find it difficult to defend such a decision with the Greek public at this time.

-- Afghanistan: Greece is underperforming in Afghanistan. Greece's regional caveat, limiting Greek military forces to a 60-kilometer radius from Kabul, is high on SHAPE's list of impediments to effective NATO operations in Afghanistan. At

every opportunity and level, we have encouraged the Greeks to contribute more (particularly OMLTs, and helicopters) to the war effort and to remove the regional caveat. In response, the Greeks offered an OMLT (limited to Kabul); are considering how they might support a Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT); have offered to redeploy a military medical unit; and have expressed willingness to take over operations of Kabul Airport. These are all positive steps -- but it is not nearly enough.

-- Russia: Over the last several months, PM Karamanlis has accelerated his long-term project of developing closer ties with Moscow. This is evident in recent deals on energy

pipelines, but also in stepped-up high-level visits, increasing cultural ties, and Greek purchases of Russian military equipment. The latter includes, most notably, signature on a deal for Greek purchase of several hundred Russian armored personnel carriers (BMPs). The BMP purchase neither advances Greece's NATO interoperability, nor improves Greek defense capabilities, and was not recommended by the Hellenic military. The Greek political leadership has often made procurement decisions on political criteria, so the purchase of Russian BMPs for criteria other than military necessity is not unprecedented, but it is disturbing. In addition to our concerns about NATO interoperability, however, we are also concerned that GOG moves toward Russia may draw Greece into a relationship that it is ill-equipped to manage.

--IMET: The Greeks are disappointed that U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) funds for Greece have been drastically reduced from USD 540,000 in 2008 to USD 100,000 in 2009. U.S. military training is a highly valued commodity with Hellenic armed forces personnel and is probably the most effective of our defense cooperation activities. We expect Greece to send more military personnel to other countries for training, with a probable concomitant increase in those nations' influence with the Greek armed forces.

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THE NECESSARY - FURTHER ENGAGEMENT  
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15. (C) From our perspective, our mil-to-mil relationship -- although imperfect -- does yield results. Our goal is to support it and strengthen it. In a Greek context, this means increased engagement, preferably on a personal level. In many fields, our cooperation with the Greeks depends more on personal relationships than any institutional ties we might develop. Getting the Greeks to "yes" on difficult issues generally requires a good argument coupled with cajoling and schmoozing. The Greeks are susceptible to flattery and quick to be offended by a perceived slight. As a result, we recommend further engagement in a few key areas:

--High-Level Consultative Committee (HLCC): Under the terms of the Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement -- the U.S.-Greece Agreement defining the terms of our military presence in Greece -- we should hold an HLCC annually to conduct a comprehensive, political-level review of our defense relationship and address any issues that have been unresolved by the working-levels. The last HLCC was held in Greece in 2006. It is our turn to host, and the Greeks have made clear their interest in this political-level meeting. Although we are skeptical that the next HLCC will result in any major breakthroughs in any of our outstanding issues, it can set the stage for progress and will provide great benefit by demonstrating to the Greeks that we do value our partnership with them -- something that they seek and that we can provide at little cost. Furthermore, there is a real opportunity to resolve outstanding operational issues (such as obtaining the permits to allow construction of an updated jet fuel pipeline at Souda Bay).

--Joint Staff and Other Mil-to-Mil Talks: The Greek military is probably the most pro-American institution in Greece, due

to our shared history and extensive ties. Greek military officers relish encounters with U.S. counterparts and often want to have "deliverables" for such encounters. We understand that the Joint Staff has proposed talks with Greek counterparts. We want to commend his initiative and encourage additional similar contacts. We understand that Greek CHOD General Grapsas also seeks to visit Washington in the Fall. How he is received could go a very long way in advancing our mil-to-mil relationship and agenda with the Greeks.

SPECKHARDBT